powerlifting emphasizing biceps

For powerlifting, you keep the Big 3 as the priority, then layer in strategic biceps work that carries over to the bench and deadlift rather than turning the day into a "bodybuilding arms" session.

Guiding principles

- Train biceps 2–3 times per week with low–moderate volume (6–12 hard sets/week) so recovery for squat/bench/dead isn't compromised.
- Emphasize movements that load the biceps in the same joint positions you need to protect: deep elbow flexion under load (row patterns, curls with a stretch), and supinated pulling for tendon robustness.
- Keep most biceps work in 6–12 reps, 1–2 reps in reserve, so tendons stay happy and elbows don't get torched when combined with heavy pressing and pulling.

Weekly structure (example)

Assume a 4-day powerlifting split (Upper 1, Lower 1, Upper 2, Lower/Pull 2).

Day 1 – Heavy bench / upper

Bench + main accessories as usual, then:

- Heavy supinated row (e.g., underhand barbell row or chest-supported underhand row):
  3–4 × 6–8
  (Loads the biceps and brachialis in a compound pattern while building lats for bench stability.)

- Heavy barbell or EZ-bar curl:
  3 × 5–8, 2–3 min rest
  Treat it like an assistance lift: strict, progressive overload, no crazy cheat reps until the last 1–2 reps of the final set.

Day 2 – Heavy deadlift / lower

Main lower work, then:

- Light–moderate biceps “tendon care” work:
  2 × 10–15 of a very controlled curl (EZ-bar or DB), slow eccentrics, no swinging.
  This keeps elbows feeling good with all the pulling you do.

Day 3 – Volume bench / upper

Bench volume and pressing/upper back work, then:

- Chin-ups or weighted chin-ups (supinated):
  4 × 6–10
  Great for elbow flexor strength and upper-back mass; big carryover to bar path control.

- Dumbbell inclination:
  Incline DB curl or “Bayesian” / face-away cable curl: 3 × 8–12
  These give a big stretch at the bottom, solid hypertrophy stimulus without needing huge loads.

Day 4 – Secondary pull / lower

After squats/front squats and posterior-chain work:

- Hammer curl (DB or cable):
  3 × 8–12
  Builds brachialis and forearms, which thickens the upper arm and supports gripping heavy deadlifts.

- Optional: very easy pump work
  1–2 × 15–20 cable curls if elbows feel good and you want extra blood flow. Keep it non-fatiguing.

Progression

- Treat the “big” biceps work (heavy curl variation, chins) like any other assistance:
  - Add 2.5–5 lb when you can hit the top end of the rep range for all sets with good form.

    - If elbows get cranky, deload biceps volume by ~50% for a week and drop the heavy barbell curl in favor of cables/DBs.
- Keep an eye on how the added biceps work affects bench and deadlift performance week to week. If bar speed or elbow comfort worsens, trim 2–4 sets of direct arm work before touching the compound volume.

Exercise selection cheat-sheet

- “Strength-style” biceps work (higher load, lower reps):
    - Barbell/EZ-bar curl
    - Weighted chin-up
    - Underhand row
- “Hypertrophy / joint friendly” options (moderate load, more control):
    - DB curls (incline, standing, or preacher)
    - Cable curls (standard, high-cable, or facing-away stretch position)
    - Hammer curls for brachialis/forearm

If you tell me your current split (days/week, where your heavy bench and dead days are), I can plug this directly into your existing program so biceps get emphasized without stepping on your main lift progress.

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1. https://www.gymreapers.com/blogs/news/best-bicep-exercises-for-mass
2. https://allaboutpowerlifting.com/5-best-exercises-for-biceps/
3. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CC6I-H1XW0E
4. https://www.boostcamp.app/blogs/arm-workouts-for-powerlifters
5. https://barbend.com/news/jeff-nippard-ranks-best-and-worst-biceps-exercises/
6. https://www.gymshark.com/blog/article/the-best-bicep-exercises-for-mass
7. https://powerliftingtechnique.com/bicep-day/

8. https://www.reddit.com/r/powerlifting/comments/1coy74e/does_bicep_training_have_a_role_in_this_sport/

9. https://www.facebook.com/becauseredsaid/videos/as-powerlifters-we-often-question-why-do-bicep-curls-if-im-a-powerlifter-i-mean-/439762012261365/